

What I claim is:

1 1. In a instant messaging system, a method of controlling instant messaging
 2 access, by the steps of:
 3 generating a recipient user controlled instant messaging contact list;
 4 segmenting the recipient user controlled instant messaging contact list;
 5 selection by the recipient user of various ones of the segmented contact list and
 6 specifying a message category membership in each segmented contact list as a technique
 7 of specifying accessibility levels to messages of selected segments of the segmented
 8 contact list.

1 2. The method of claim 1, including a further step of:
 2 assigning each one of the segmented contact lists a status level of accessibility.

1 3. The method of claim 2, including a further step of:
 2 associating a blocking/non-blocking status to selected ones of said segmented
 3 contact lists.

1 4. The method of claim 2, including a further step of:
 2 associating a priority status to selected ones of said segmented contact lists.

1 5. The method of claim 2, further including a step of:
 2 associating a prioritized rational for granting accessibility in each of the selected
 3 ones of said segmented contact lists.

1 6. In an instant messaging system having a capability for sending instant
 2 messages and monitoring an on-line status of PCs connected to a managing
 3 server/servers, a method for permitting a recipient of instant messages to control

accessibility to receive instant messages from a list of potential senders, comprising the steps of:

preparing a contact list of potential acceptable senders of instant messages;
segmenting the contact list into a plurality of categories and inserting selected names from the list of potential acceptable senders in selected ones of the plurality of categories;
enabling selected ones of the plurality of categories for controlling the acceptance of instant messages from senders of the selected ones of the plurality of categories.

7. The method of claim 6 including a further step of:

associating with each category a status further defining instant message acceptability from the listed senders in that category.

8. The method of claim 7, including a step of:

displaying the contact list to a potential recipient of instant messages to allow the potential instant recipient to interact with the contact list in real time.

9. The method of claim 8 further including a step of:

permitting individual names to selectively appear on a plurality of the categories of the contact list.

10. The method of claim 9, including a further step of:

presenting the contact list in a matrix format.